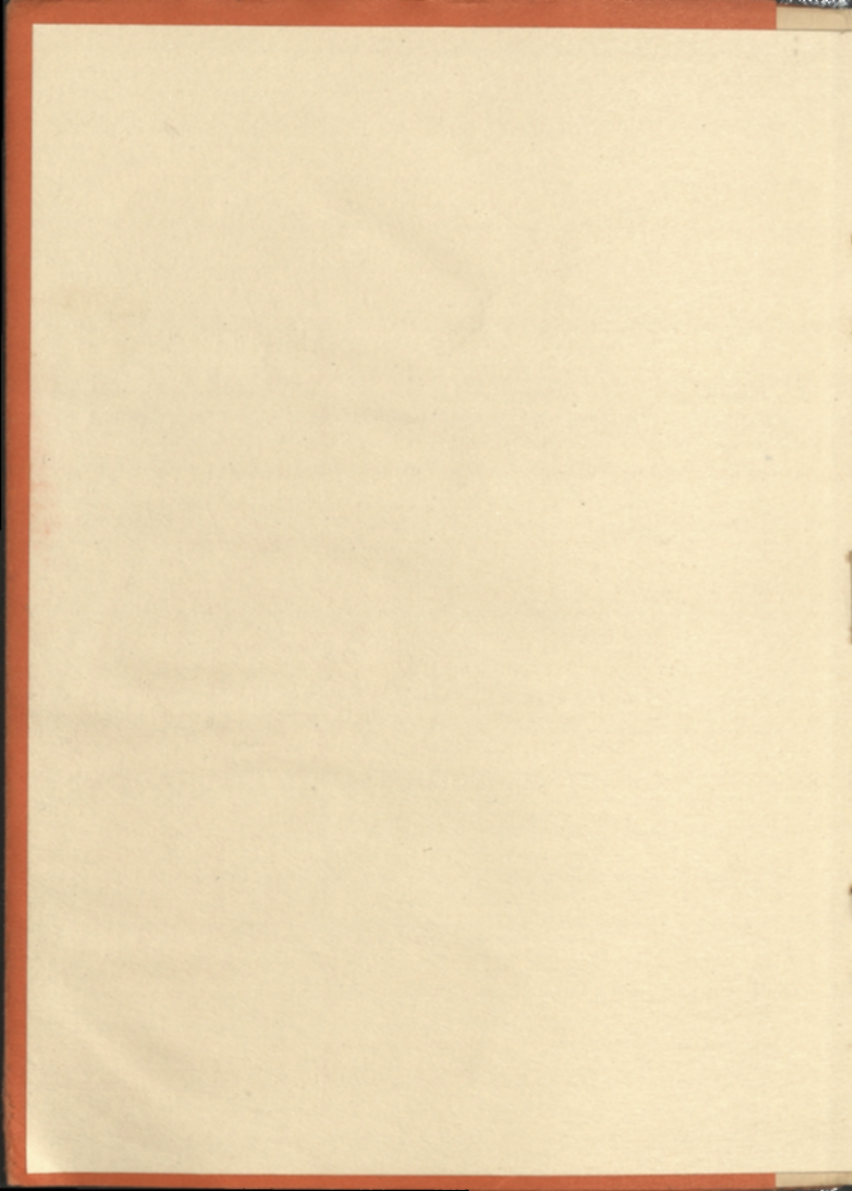
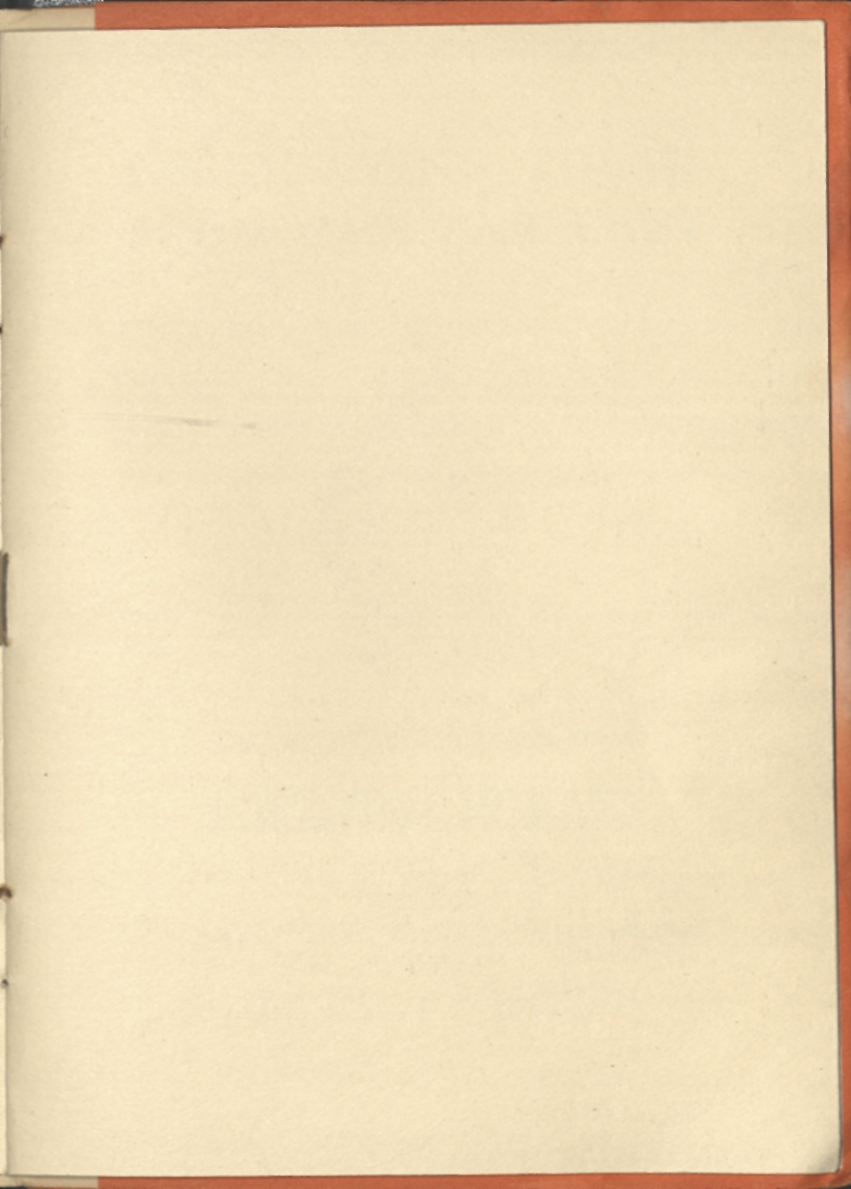


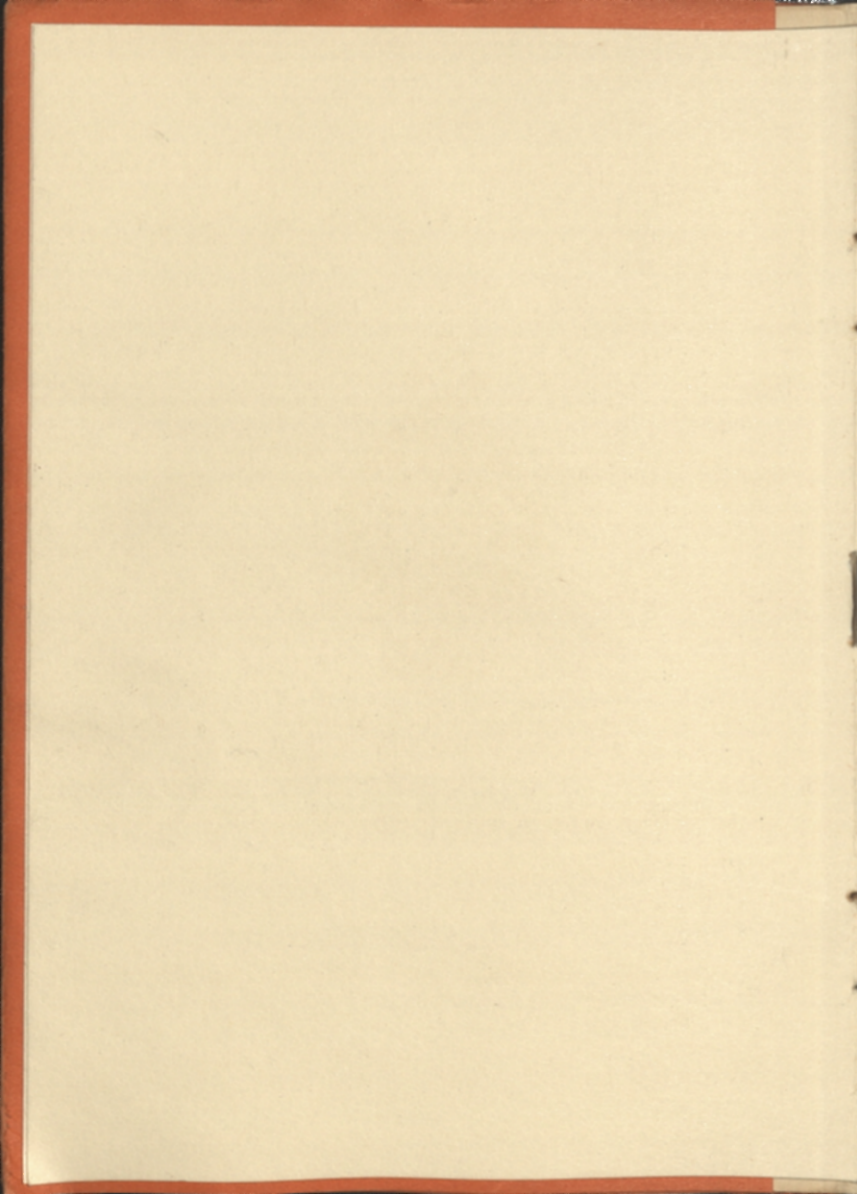
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FASCINATING FORMS FROM THE FAR EAST



Decorative Fabrics of Distinction

STROHEIM & ROMANN

730 FIFTH AVENUE at 57th STREET
NEW YORK

CHICAGO
Heyworth Bldg.

BOSTON
Berkeley Bldg.

PHILADELPHIA
Finance Bldg.

LOS ANGELES
Chillis Block

SAN FRANCISCO
Jewelers Bldg.



14th century Chinese brocade with parallel
lotus vine pattern.



WESTERN decorative art has long been susceptible to the innate beauty of Chinese design. Centuries ago, cautious caravans laden with luxuries first perilously "made the road", as it was called, across the continent of Asia, and so opened the way for the introduction of Chinese art in the West. Precious webs and priceless porcelains could not but dazzle unfamiliar eyes with their rare beauty, and an indelible impress was made upon the decorative arts of all alien countries that came under their spell.

FOLLOWING the Mongol invasion of Western Asia in the 13th and 14th centuries, numbers of curiously animated beasts and birds, half real and half mythological, usurped a place on Persian textiles. These impetuous animals, prototypes of the Chinese khilin,

fonghoang, lungma, crane, hare, turtle, and dragon, seem to have been endowed with a tenacious hold on existence for again and again we recognize them romping across Persian, Spanish and Italian fabrics up to the time of the Renaissance.

OF these forms, the dragon probably enjoyed least popularity outside of China, the fact that it was the imperial emblem notwithstanding. Spitting flames or fighting tigers, it always was a little terrifying to occidental minds. That fabulous animal of good omen, the khilin, which is said to have appeared at the time of Confucius' birth, seemed to be accepted with less fear, and its stag's body, ox's tail and unicorn's horn make it readily recognizable on designs of Chinese inspiration. The Empress's emblem, the fonghoang, with its swallow's beak, pheasant's head and long streaming tail, also appealed strongly to the decorative sense of Near-Eastern and Western weavers.



14th century Persian brocade showing
Chinese influence.

NOT less popular was the lotus motif, which symbolized by its own spotless blossoming the triumph of purity over impurity. Buddha, likening all humanity to the lotus, saw that some of his fellow creatures never lifted their heads above the slimy mud in which they grew; others budded only to die; while still others fulfilled their destiny and blossomed. The "Enlightened" himself, as Buddha was called, represented the perfect flowering, and the lotus was one of the many emblems of good fortune which were supposedly found on the soles of his feet.

THE symbolic significance of the lotus, which made the flower a special favorite in Chinese art, did not necessarily determine its popularity as a motif of design in the decorative art styles of other countries. Persia adopted it, as she did other symbolic motifs from the Far East, without understanding, yet with a deep appreciation of its beautiful form. Over and over again the lotus, palmette and vine occur in Persian design, thence to be taken up by the Italian designers who even-



*Detail from a Venetian silk of the 14th century.
The entire pattern shows birds and
undulating parallel vines.*

tually transformed the palmette into the distinctly Gothic pomegranate pattern.

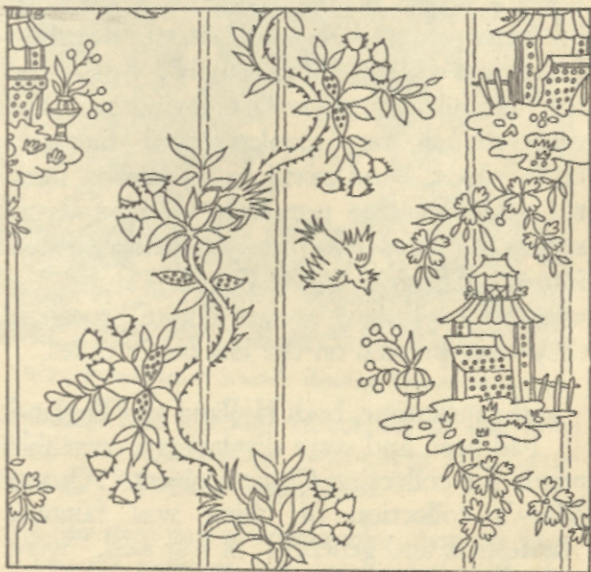
VENICE, the great carrier of the world's commerce during the mediaeval period, was especially influenced by patterns from the East. Her traders, who were in constant communication with Persia and Byzantium, brought back with them all manner of silks and precious tissues of both Chinese and

Near-Eastern manufacture. Offered for sale in the shops of the Rialto, we can well imagine what an irresistible appeal their gorgeous color and spirited patterns must have made to the pleasure loving Venetian housewives, when they came to buy their daily supply of fish and meat and fruit.

AND how thrilled the townsmen must have been by tales of the romantic journeys of the Polos, returned from the court of the Great Khan! What an astonishing metamorphosis these adventurous gentlemen effected by appearing first in rags and then in the magnificent attire of the East, finally reaching the miraculous climax of their spectacular display by ripping open the seams of their ragged garments and letting fall all manner of precious stones—rubies, diamonds and pearls! It was events such as these that kept oriental patterns alive in Venice longer than in other Italian weaving centers.

DURING the Renaissance asymmetry gave place to symmetry and the restless unpaired animal patterns disappeared from

Italian silks. The parallel undulating arrangement of vine ornament, which had also been borrowed from China, was likewise discarded to be revived during the Baroque and successive style periods. We are especially familiar with this type of pattern as it occurs in textiles of the 18th century wherein the



18th century design for tissue for the
manufactory at Tours.

undulating bands become ribbons, lace, fur, feathers, or garlands of flowers.

WHILE France had been susceptible to a certain Chinese influence during the reign of Louis XIV, *Chinoiserie* and *Singerie* did not come into distinct vogue until the Louis XV period. It was then that the leading artists of the day—Watteau, Boucher, Huet, and Gillot—all succumbed to the fad for fanciful arrangements of mandarins and grotesque figures, monkeys and fantastic birds, pagodas and pavilions, umbrellas, fans, teapots, and other peculiarly Chinese accessories. Motifs such as these were incorporated into the tapestries of the Gobelins and Beauvais; they were woven into choice brocades; they were printed on the less costly toiles.

IN the meantime, both Holland and England had been and were displaying a veritable mania for collecting Chinese objects. Queen Mary's collection of china was famous. "Statesmen and generals," it was said, "were not ashamed to be renowned as judges of teapots and dragons," while every ambitious



18th century French brocade showing Chinese influence.

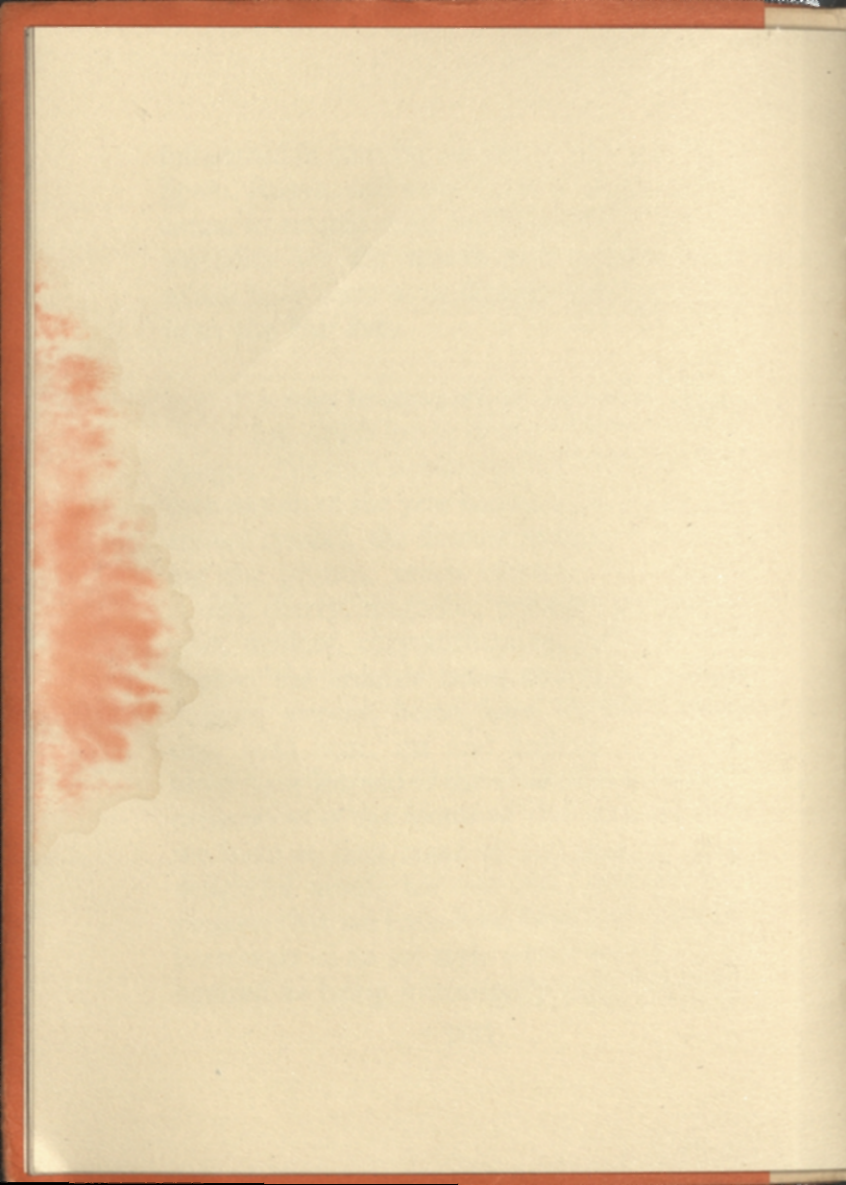
amateur had a room furnished in the new fashion with hangings, wall-paper and furniture all Chinese in inspiration.

IN our own day of cosmopolitanism we have become more or less acquainted with the art styles of many countries. We have been

influenced in turn by the art of France, Italy, Spain, Russia, and even Egypt. Always there seems to remain with us, however, a certain partiality for the motifs and arrangements which have come to us directly and indirectly from the Far East.

WE may be ignorant of the inner meaning which lies in back of many of these designs. We may not know, for instance, that each month of the year has its own flower and animal symbol, the flowers in their order being the prunus, peach blossom, tree-peony, double cherry, magnolia, pomegranate, lotus, pear, mallow, chrysanthemum, gardenia and poppy; the animals being the tiger, rabbit, dragon, serpent, horse, hare, monkey, fowl, dog, wild boar, rat and bullock. We may never have learned of the symbolism of things, exhaustive as the atoms of the universe, but we have at least come to feel that all these delightful motifs are our own, and the fact remains that we have been keen and constant borrowers of an art style which we have recognized as being intrinsically very beautiful.







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